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# Educational News and Editorial Comment

## A FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A bill was introduced in the United States Senate on October 10 by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia providing for a Department of Education in the federal government and appropriating in addition to the expense funds for such a department the sum of one hundred million dollars for federal support of various types of education.

The bill, which is too long to quote in full, provides for a secretary of education and at least three assistant secretaries. It leaves the determination of the extent to which the new department shall absorb the functions of other departments and commissions to the President. Thus the relation of the new department to the educational work now being carried on by the Department of Agriculture or by the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor would depend on the President's ruling. So also would the status of the Federal Board for Vocational Education.

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The bill describes only in broad general terms the duties of the new department. It is to encourage investigations, especially with reference to illiteracy and immigrant education; it is to promote public-school education, with emphasis on the problems of rural districts; it is to be active in developing public-health education and recreation and in establishing and aiding agencies for preparation of teachers. It is to encourage higher and professional education.

The hundred million dollars is to be apportioned to the following purposes in the following fractions: three-fortieths to combating illiteracy, three-fortieths to Americanizing immigrants, one-half to the improvement of public schools of less than college grade, two-tenths for the promotion of physical and health education and recreation, and three-twentieths for the training of teachers.

In providing for the distribution of this money to the states two principles are adopted: Each state is to share according to its needs and according to its willingness to contribute from its own treasury new funds for the development of schools.

The bill thus launched has the support of the senator who in recent years has had more influence than any man in Congress in securing educational legislation. It is essentially the measure proposed by the commission of the National Education Association and approved by the Pittsburgh meeting. It is approved by a number of the leading universities and colleges.

It will meet the theoretical opposition of those who do not believe in federal participation in education. It will encounter difficulties because the educational activities of the federal government which are now numerous enough to answer the above-mentioned objection are so widely distributed through other departments and commissions as to make a readjustment a most delicate undertaking. It will doubtless undergo some revisions on its way through Congress.

It will get the support of all who see the importance of a democratic education of national scope. Today our states are provincial, and many of them are so far behind in their policies of public education and child labor that it is perfectly evident that a federal agency must be created to cope with our educational problems.

The example of England in this matter is clear. In the midst of war England passed the most progressive educational measure of her history because all political parties recognized that the most important problem of the reconstruction period will be the improvement of popular education. Can we who boast a more liberal educational policy than any other nation do less?

The editors of the *School Review* believe that no more important step has ever been taken in American education. The consideration of the national problems of education is now before us. We ought as members of the educational profession to see to it that the issues presented by this bill are clearly understood by teachers and laymen. There ought to be constructive suggestions from all sides. Teachers' meetings should give time and thought to the formulation of intelligent opinion. The occasion is one which gives the best opportunity ever afforded for our profession to throw off to its own advantage and to the advantage of public schools in all sections the narrow provincialism with which we have too often been justly charged.

#### THE ENGLISH COMMISSION

For the last month and a half an English commission on higher education has been visiting the leading universities and colleges of this country for the purpose of promoting a more intimate relationship between the scholars of England and America. The members bring with them the message that English universities have modified their methods of granting

degrees in the hope and expectation that American students will come to England for graduate work. They are eager to find out what kind of courses should be offered during the period of demobilization in order to attract to English universities American boys who are in Europe. They want to find out what opportunities America has to offer to English students in order that the interchange of students and instructors may be reciprocal.

This English commission will doubtless be followed by like groups of visitors from France and Italy, and it is not unlikely that commissions will come from the countries which have seemed to us more remote. For example, as Russia emerges into her new national life her people are sure to seek a fuller contact with our educational institutions. The Balkan states to some of which our missionary teachers have gone are sure to come into a new and more intimate relation with us.

The coming of the English commission suggests two reflections regarding lower schools. It will be an unfortunate oversight if this group or any like group goes home without gaining some understanding of the organization of the whole scheme of education in the United States. The colleges and universities of this country have been so largely influenced by the secondary schools during the last two decades that it is literally true that no one can understand our higher education who does not cultivate an intimate knowledge of our high schools.

Secondly, no commission which visits us should be allowed to go away without understanding that our schools and colleges are not under central control and hence are at once freer and more variant than anything that is known in Europe. This is in some respects a weakness of our system, but it is also a source of strength. Commissions will not understand us until they know what is meant by the statement that we have grown up educationally under local control. In Europe there is

always a central control which assumes responsibility and is held responsible. In the United States we experiment freely, each administrative unit following in very large measure its own judgment. The check on our freedom is developing in the form of a science of education which measures and compares results. Europe is far behind us in these scientific studies. A commission from a centrally controlled educational system will have difficulty in understanding this even in two months of inspection.

There is one practical suggestion which may be made with a view to correcting some of the present deficiencies in our international educational relationships. There ought to be a permanent avenue of communication with our allies. There should be a permanent commission on this side of the Atlantic to deal with the problems that are brought up by the English commission.

All this comes back to the matters discussed in the earlier comments on the last few pages. The United States needs a national educational organization.

#### THE GROWING NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The National Education Association has today the largest membership in its history—somewhat over 30,000. The executive officers are confident that by January 1 there will be more than 50,000 and that by spring or summer the goal set, namely, 100,000, will be reached.

The growth of the Association ought to kindle professional enthusiasm in the minds of teachers in every grade of schools. Secondary teachers and principals have up to this time held aloof because they have felt that the Association since the early nineties has concerned itself chiefly with elementary-school problems and sometimes with matters bearing very little on public education. There is an opportunity and a method of redeeming the past decades. The reason why a

few energetic politically minded individuals were able nearly to wreck the Association was that the able-minded professional teachers of the country did not participate. We have passed through a period of rank individualism. People of no productivity in education have jockeyed for personal advantage. The way to defeat that sort of thing is to get a real mission for the Association and then bring into the membership enough people to render it impossible for the Association to be controlled for local or petty ends.

This program is promisingly launched. New members are coming in. Many of them are frankly in on trial. They want a constructive program.

Here are two items for such a program: First, the Association ought to undertake to eradicate every trace of the breach between elementary and secondary schools. This country has contributed to the democracy of the world a continuous school system. Our history in this matter is unique. We ought to realize fully the ideal which has placed our secondary school in the relation which it occupies to elementary education.

The second item on which teachers ought to unite is a thoroughgoing reform in the content of American education in order to bring into the schools in a position of first importance instruction in American institutions. In order that there may be a place for this sort of study, there must be readjustment of the traditional subjects. Modern American institutions cannot be approached indirectly through something so remote that the pupil never comes into contact with the world in which he lives. There is a social and professional problem here with which the teaching profession must cope.

Let us have once more, as in the days when Eliot and Harris led the National Education Association in the ways of intelligence, discussions of the course of study. Let the Association set up international relations and interstate policies. Let us throw overboard without debate and even

without acrimony those who have steered the Association into shallow waters.

President Strayer is to be congratulated on the success of the campaign for the enlargement of the Association. The proposals for the creation of a representative organization ought to be put through without further parley and then the Association ought to begin constructive work on real policies.

#### HIGH-SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The state superintendent of Illinois in a recent bulletin calls the attention of county superintendents to a statute which was passed by the legislature of Illinois some time ago.

Your attention is called to the following provision of the law enacted by the Fiftieth General Assembly and found on page 21 of Circular 123 issued by the Department of Public Instruction under section 90.

"If any high-school district organized under any of the provisions of this Act, or organized under any statute in force at the time of its organization, or legalized by any statute, shall for one year fail to maintain a recognized high school, it shall be the duty of the ex-officio board of the county in which the larger part of the district lies to dissolve said high-school districts, and attach the territory of the district to other high-school districts, or to non-high-school districts, or in part to both. All funds or property of such district shall be distributed by the county superintendent of schools as provided in section 92 of this Act."

This applies to any township or community high school whether organized under the general school law (sections 85, 86, 87, 88), or under the act of 1911 and validated by the action of the Fiftieth General Assembly or under the community high-school provision (section 89).

The attention of all school boards, in your county for districts created under any of these provisions, who are not now maintaining a recognized high-school, according to the standards approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction as defined in section 95, should be called to this provision and they should immediately communicate with this office and take steps without delay to secure such recognition; otherwise it will be the duty of the county ex-officio board to dissolve the district and dispose of its territory, and of the county superintendent, to dispose of its funds and other property as provided in this section.

The law referred to in Superintendent Blair's communication is of general interest because it calls attention to one defect in the educational organization of most of our states. This defect appears in the fact that there is no adequate provision for the complete districting of the state for secondary education. The constitutions of American states all provide for the districting of the whole territory for purposes of elementary education. There is no foot of ground in these states that is not located in some school district. High schools, on the other hand, came at first as luxuries, and the principle was not recognized that the territory of the states ought to be so divided that every part of the state would be in some high-school district. As secondary education has become more and more common the practice of arranging high-school districts in a somewhat irregular fashion has grown up. In general, the district covered by a high-school, especially a rural high-school, must of necessity include more territory than the district provided for elementary education. The high-school district very frequently does not coincide, therefore, with the elementary district. In the absence of explicit legislation providing for the districting of the whole state certain sections are only vaguely provided for. Indeed, sometimes no provision whatsoever is made in certain parts of the state. Furthermore, where a high-school district is provided, it very frequently fails to carry out its purpose because the compulsory education law does not operate to enforce the maintenance of a high-school as it does to enforce the maintenance of an elementary school.

The contrast between the high-school situation and the college and university situation is also worth mentioning. The whole state is in a very proper sense of the word the territory of the state university and of the agricultural college, and because this is so there is no part of the state which is not included in the district of the higher institution. The high school, therefore, falls between the district school and the state

university and is not provided for without explicit action on the part of the legislature.

High-school officers ought to study the question of the proper districting of the state for high schools. They will find a number of statutes similar to the one referred to in Superintendent Blair's note which approach the problem but do not solve it. They will also find a great lack of attention to the type of problem to which this note calls attention.

#### SOCIETY OF COLLEGE TEACHERS OF EDUCATION

*Committee work.*—The Society of College Teachers of Education is carrying forward a progressive program of study-problems through a committee organization which was approved at the last meeting of the Society at Atlantic City.

A fair proportion of the members have indicated an interest in the work of one of these committees. Members of more of the committees are urged to do so. The committees together with the chairman of each, are as follows:

1. Uniform Nomenclature in Education, W. C. BAGLEY, *Chairman*, Teachers College, Columbia University.
2. The Organization of College Studies in Education, W. C. RUEDIGER, *Chairman*, George Washington University, Washington.
3. Professional Curricula for Different Types of Teachers with Immediate Attention to Supervisors and Superintendents, A. J. JONES, *Chairman*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
4. Standards for Departments, Schools, and Colleges of Education, J. E. BUTTERWORTH, *Chairman*, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.
5. Uniform Plan of Issuing State Certificates to College Graduates, HELEN UPDEGRAFF, *Chairman*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
6. Practice Teaching for Secondary Teachers, A. R. MEED, *Chairman*, Ohio Wesleyan University, Oberlin, Ohio.
7. Placing Bureaus of Colleges and Universities, F. E. THOMPSON, *Chairman*, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

A member interested and willing to co-operate in the work of any committee, should write direct to the chairman.

G. M. WILSON, *Secretary*